

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7070

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2339

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR LA TH UR FR VN

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON LAOS AND THE SOVIET CONNECTION

REF: VIENTIANE 2160

SUMMARY. FRENCH SOURCES REPORT THAT LAO PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE HELD UNPUBLICIZED DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET MILITARY LEADERS DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO MOSCOW AND WILL RETURN THERE FOR ANOTHER THREE DAYS OF MEETINGS AFTER VISITING EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

FRENCH EMBASSY COUNSELOR BELIEVES THAT SOVIETS ARE TALKING TO LAO ABOUT SENDING LAO TROOPS TO THAILAND TO AID COMMUNIST TERRORISTS. HE ALSO SAYS LAO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NOUHAK PHOUMKUSAVANH ESCAPED INJURY IN GUERRILLA AMBUSH OF CONPXXQ NEAR SAVANNAKHET. COUNSELOR ALSO REPORTS VIETNAMESE AND LAO ARE CONSTRUCTING FUEL PIPELINE FROM NAPE PASS TO AREA NORTH OF THA KHEK. LOCAL FRENCH SOURCES CONFIRM FRENCH PRESS REPORT THAT LAO USED POISON GAS

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BOMB TO KILL HMONG (MEO) IN LONG TIENG AREA. FRENCH JOURNALIST

ADDS THAT HMONG SHOT DOWN MIG-19 WITH LAO PILOTS AT LONG TIENG, WHERE ABOUT 10 MIG-19S ARE REPORTEDLY BASED. END SUMMARY.

1. FRENCH EMBASSY COUNSELOR LAMBERT IN CALL ON EMBASSY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF SAID FRENCH HAD REPORT FROM THEIR EMBASSY IN MOSCOW THAT LAO PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE DURINRMSEPTEMBER 6 VISIT HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET MILITARY, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN PUBLICIZED. AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE CORRESPONDENT FIOL SEPARATELY

SAID THAT KAYSONE PLANNED RETURN TO MOSCOW FOR THREE-DAY VISIT, HIS FOURTH IN NINE MONTHS, UPON COMPLETION OF HIS CURRENT TOUR OF EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

2. LAMBERT SPECULATED THAT SOVIETS WERE TALKING TO LAO ABOUT SENDING LAO TROOPS TO THAILAND TO AID THAI INSURGENTS. LAMBERT THOUGHT LAO TROOPS WOULD BE INFILTRATED AS INDIVIDUALS OR IN SMALL GROUPS RATHER THAN AS UNITS. HE HYPOTHESIZED THAT LAO WERE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN LAOS SUPPOGRED FROM THAILAND AND HAD CONCLUDED THAT BEST DEFENSE WOULD TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE BY TRYING TOIPIBERATE THAILAND IN ORDER TO STOP SUPPORT FROM THERE OF LAO MAQUIS.

3. ACCORDING TO LAMBERT, LAO POLITBURO MEMBER AND EPUTY PRIME MINISTER NOUHAK WAS AMBUSHED RECENTLY BY GUERRILLAS WHILE RJDRIVING IN CONVOY BETWEEN SAVANNAKHET AND NONG BOK. HE ESCAPED INJURY ALTHOUGH ACCOMPANY LAO FORCES SUFFEREDIJOME CASUALTIEIS. LAMBERT SAID IT WAS UNSAFE TO TRAVEL BY ROAD IN ANY DIRECTION OUTSIDE SAVANNAKHET.

4. LAHBET ALSO SAUY LAO AND VINNAMESE WERE CONTRUCTING FUEL PIKRPELINE FROM VIETNAME VIA NAPE PASS TO AREA NEAR PHON TIOU TIN MINE CLOSE TO MEKONG RIVER FRONTIER WITH THAILAND. HE ESTIMATED PIPELINE WOULD BE FINISHED WITHIN SIX MONTHS. LAMBERT ADDED THAT CONSTRUCTION OF PIPELINE HAD BEEN HARASSED BY GUERRILLAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BUT THAT IT WAS PROCEEDING. (EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED EARLIER REPORT FROM FRENCH THW GUERRILLAS SET OFF EXPLOSIONS IN HILLS SURROUCGING NAPE PASS WHICH BLOCKED ROAD TRAVEL THROUGH IT AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.)

5. LAMBERT SAID VIETNAMESE TROOPS STILL WERE PRESENT IN AREA
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WHERE PIPELINE IS TERMINATING BETWEEN AM KADING AND NAM HINBOUN RIVERS WHICH FLOW INTO MEMKONG NORTH OF THAKHEK. FRENCH COMMERICAL ATTACHE ROUZO DRIVING FROM VIENTIANE TO THAKHEK SEVERAL MONTHS AGO LAMBERT SAID, HAD RECEIVED LAISSEZ PASSER AT LAO CHECKPOINT ON NORTY BANK OF NAM KADING BUT, AFTER HE HAD TAKEN FERRY TO SOUTH BANK, VIETNAMESE HAD REFUSHED TO ALLOW HIM TO GO ON. ROUZO THEN RETURNED TO NORTH BANK AND GOT

LAO OFFICIAL TO ACCOMPANY HIM BACK TO SOUTH BANK WHERE LU

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6. LAMBERT AND FIOL ALSO SEPARATELY CONFIRMED GIST OF ARTICLE IN RECNET ISSUE OF FRENCH MAGAZINE LE POINT REPORTING CHARGES BY HMONG REFUGEES IN THAILAND THAT LAGDROPPED POISON GAS BOMB ON HMONG AROUND LONG TIENG. LAMBERT SAID REPORT HAD BEEN PASSED TO JACQUES LEMOINE (SP?), A FRENCH ETHNOLOGIST WHO HAD WORKED WITH HMONG FOR YEARS AND HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN BANGKOK. LAMBETT SAID ABOUT 300 HMONG AND MANY ANIMALSHLAD BEEN KIWIJED BY REDDISH GAS LIKE THAT USED UO YPRES IN WORLD WAR I. FIOL SAID ONLY ABOUT 80 PERSONS HAD BEEN KILLED. HE ADDED THAT SO-CALLED "18/21" LAO RESISTANCE GROUP IN THAILAND HAD SENT LETTER TO WORLD COURT CHARGING VIOLATION OF INTERNWNIONAL AGREEMENTS BANNING USE OF POISION GAS.

7. FIOL SAID USE OF GAS FOLLOWED HMONG SHOOTING DOWN OF MIG-19 AND SOVIET HELICOPTER IN LONG TIENG AREA. WHEN POL SECTION CHIEF QQUESTIONED PRESENCE OF MIG AT LONG TIENG, FIOL SAID HE TOO HAD QUESTIONED IT BUT HAD RECEIVED CONFIRMATION FROM FOUR SEPARATE SOURCES. (THAI MILITARY ATTACHE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED PRESENCE OF MIG'S IN XIENG KHOUANG.) FIOL SAID HMONG USED MACHINE GUN TO DOWN MIG PILOTED BY LAO EITHER LANDING OR TAKING OFF AT LONG TIENG. HE SAID 10 OR 12 MIG'S WERE STATIONED THERE. FIOL ADDED THAT HMONG IN SAME AREA HAD SUBSEQUENTLY SHOT DOWN HELICOPTER, KILLING FOUR SOVIETS, AS PREMHOUSLY REPORTED.

8. FIOL ALSO NOTED THAT EACH MONTH ABOUT 100 "PROGRESSIVE" FRENCH-LAEN, OR ABOUT 1,000 A YEAR, WERE COMING AS TOURISTS TO VIETNAM TO VISIT HANOI AND BEACH RESORLOM

9. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT PRC EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE HAD EARLIER BEEN ISSUING ABOUT 100 PASSPORTS A MONTH TO CHINESE LEAVING LAOS
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FOR THAILAND, HONG KONG, AND ELSEWHERE. PRC EMBASSY ISSUED PASSPORTS, HE SAID, TO NEEDLE LAO BECAUSE OF THEIR ATTACHEMENT TO SOVIETS. WHEN LPDR PROTESTED TO PRC EMBASSY ABOUT ISSUANCE OF PASSPORTS, HOWEVER, EMBASSY STOPPED DOING SO. (WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE STILL SIZEABLE GROUPS OF CHINESE LEAVING VIENTIANE ON FLIGHTS TO BANGKOK WITH WHAT APPEAR TO BE ALL THEIR EARTHLY POSSESSIONS.)

10. FRENCH AMBASSADOR DUZER ALSO TOLD US FRENCH DELEGATION PLANNING TO VISIT LAOS HAS AGAIN POSTPONED ARRIVAL DATE AND IS NOW SCHEDULED TO COME IN OCTOBER, LED BY SENPBR QUAI OFFICIAL.

1. COMMENT: SPECULATION ABOUT INTRODUCTION OF LAO TROOPS INTO THAILAND AND REPORTS OF USE OF POISON GAS AND PRESENCE OF MIG'S IN LONG TIENG AREA SEEM RATHER WILD. FRENCH HERE ARE APPARENTLY

FAST BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH THE LAO COMMUNISTS AND
WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS THEY COMPLETE SUBSERVIENCE TO THE SOVIETS.
THE FRENCH STILL HAVE A GREAT MANY SOURCES HERE WHICH
RANGE WIDELY IN KNOWLEDGEABLENESS AND CREDIBILITY.
WE FORWARD THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS MESSAGE AS
AN INTERESTING FRENCH DISTITZATION OF INFORMATION FROM
THESE SOUCNES. ALTHOUGH WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THE LPDR
DCWOULD CONCNETGK 53, 94 523);3 MIGS AT LONG TIENG
AIRSTRIPE BECAUSE OF THE TOPOGRAPHY, THE SOVIETS HAVE IN
FACT BEEN TRAINING LAO PILOTS AND IT IS REASONABLE TO
SUPPOSE THEY HAVE PROVIDED AIRPLANES FOR THEM TO FLY.
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